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New York

President:	Mr. Fall	(Guinea)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Helder Lucas
	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	Cameroon	Mr. Belinga-Eboutou
	Chile	Mr. Valdés
	China	Mr. Wang Yingfan
	France	Mr. Galouzeau de Villepin
	Germany	Mr. Fischer
	Mexico	Mr. Aguilar Zinser
	Pakistan	Mr. Akram
	Russian Federation	Mr. Ivanov
	Spain	Mr. Arias
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Al-Shara'
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Negroponte

Agenda

The situation between Iraq and Kuwait.

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03-28604 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation between Iraq and Kuwait

The President *(spoke in French)*: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Iraq in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Aldouri (Iraq) took a seat at the Council table.

The President *(spoke in French)*: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Hans Blix, Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Blix to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Gustavo Zlauvinen, Representative of the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Zlauvinen to take a seat at the Council table.

I welcome the presence of the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, at this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I shall first give the floor to Mr. Hans Blix, Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission.

Mr. Blix: The United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) was established by Security Council resolution 1284 (1999) and was enabled to enter Iraq and carry out its inspection work almost three years later.

It might seem strange that we are presenting a draft work programme only after having already performed the inspections for three and a half months. However, there were good reasons why the Council wanted to give us some time after the start of inspections to prepare this programme. During the months of the build-up of our resources in Iraq, Larnaca and New York and of inspections in Iraq we have — as was indeed the purpose — learned a great deal that has been useful to know for the drafting of our work programme and for the selection of key remaining disarmament tasks. It would have been difficult to draft it without this knowledge and practical experience.

The time lines established in resolution 1284 (1999) have been understood to mean that the work programme was to be presented for the approval of the Council at the latest on 27 March. In order to meet the wishes of members of the Council we made the draft work programme available already on Monday this week. I note that on the very same day we were constrained together with other United Nations units to order the withdrawal of all our inspectors and other international staff from Iraq.

I naturally feel sadness that three and a half months of work carried out in Iraq have not brought the assurances needed about the absence of weapons of mass destruction or other proscribed items in Iraq, that no more time is available for our inspections and that armed action now seems imminent.

At the same time I feel a sense of relief that it was possible to withdraw yesterday all United Nations international staff, including that of UNMOVIC and the International Atomic Energy Agency. I note that the Iraqi authorities gave full cooperation to achieve this and that our withdrawal to Larnaca took place in a safe and orderly manner. Some sensitive equipment was also taken to Larnaca, while other equipment was left, and our offices in Baghdad have been sealed. Some inspection staff will now remain for a short time in

Larnaca to prepare inspection reports. Others who have come from our roster of trained staff, will go home to their previous positions and could be available again, if the need arises.

I would like to make some specific comments that relate to the draft programme. I am aware of ideas that have been advanced that specific groups of disarmament issues could be tackled and solved within specific time lines. The programme does not propose such an approach, in which, say, we would aim at addressing and resolving the issues of anthrax and VX in March and unmanned aerial vehicles and remotely piloted vehicles in April. In the work we have pursued until now, we have worked broadly and did not neglect any identified disarmament issues. However, it is evidently possible for the Council to single out a few issues for resolution within a specific time, just as the draft programme before members select 12 key tasks, progress on which could have an impact on the Council's assessment of cooperation of Iraq under resolution 1284 (1999). Whatever approach is followed, results will depend on Iraq's active cooperation on substance.

May I add that, in my last report, I commented on the information provided by Iraq on a number of unresolved issues. Since then, Iraq has sent several more letters on such issues. These efforts by Iraq should be acknowledged, but, as I noted in this Council on 7 March, the value of the information thus provided must be soberly judged. Our experts have found so far that, in substance, only limited new information has been provided that will help to resolve remaining questions.

Under resolution 1284 (1999), UNMOVIC's work programme is to be submitted to the Council for approval. I note, however, that what was drafted and prepared for implementation by a large staff of UNMOVIC inspectors and other resources deployed to Iraq would seem to have only limited practical relevance in the current situation.

UNMOVIC is a subsidiary organ of the Security Council. Until the Council takes a new decision regarding the role and functions of the Commission, the previous resolutions remain valid to the extent this is practicable. It is evidently for the Council to consider the next steps.

In its further deliberations, I hope the Council will be aware that it has in UNMOVIC staff a unique body of international experts who owe their allegiance to the United Nations and who are trained as inspectors in the field of weapons of mass destruction. While the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has a large department of skilled nuclear inspectors and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has a large staff of skilled chemical weapons inspectors, no other international organization has trained inspectors in the field of biological weapons and missiles. There is also in the secretariat of UNMOVIC staff familiar with and trained in the analysis of both discipline-specific issues and the broad questions of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. With increasing attention being devoted to the proliferation of these weapons, this capability may be valuable to the Council.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Gustavo Zlauvinen, representative of the Director General of the IAEA.

Mr. Zlauvinen: I have the honour to inform the members of the Security Council that the Director General of the IAEA has transmitted today the work programme of the IAEA, in accordance with paragraph 7 of Security Council resolution 1284 (1999).

As the Council can see, the work programme is self-explanatory, and the Director General would be available any time in the future to discuss with the Security Council the IAEA's work programme should the Council decide to do so.

The President (*spoke in French*): Before giving the floor to the members of the Council, I wish to recall the understanding reached among ourselves, namely, that all participants will limit their statements to no more than seven minutes in order to enable the Council to work efficiently within its timetable.

I now call on His Excellency Mr. Joschka Fischer, Vice-Chancellor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany.

Mr. Fischer (Germany): I would like to thank the Security Council presidency for its excellent work at this difficult time.

The Security Council is meeting here today in a dramatic situation. At this moment, the world is facing an imminent war in Iraq.

The Security Council cannot remain silent in this situation. Today more than ever, our task must be to

safeguard its function and to preserve its relevance. We have come together once more in New York today to emphasize that.

The developments of the last few hours have radically changed the international situation and brought the work of the United Nations on the ground to a standstill. Those developments are cause for the deepest concern.

Nevertheless, I would like to thank Mr. Blix for his briefing on the work programme. Germany fully supports his approach, even under the current circumstances. The work programme with its realistic description of unresolved disarmament issues now lies before us. It provides clear and convincing guidelines on how to disarm Iraq peacefully within a short space of time.

I want to stress this fact, particularly today. It is possible to disarm Iraq peacefully by upholding those demands with tight deadlines. Peaceful means have therefore not been exhausted. Also for that reason, Germany emphatically rejects the impending war.

We deeply regret that our considerable efforts to disarm Iraq using peaceful means in accordance with Security Council resolution 1441 (2002) seem to have no chance of success. Time and again during the last few weeks, we have collaborated with France and Russia to put forward proposals for a more efficient inspections regime consisting of clear disarmament steps with deadlines, most recently on 15 March.

Other members also submitted constructive proposals until the final hours of the negotiations. We are grateful to them for their efforts.

During the last few days, we have moved significantly closer to our common objective: that of effectively countering the risk posed by Iraqi weapons of mass destruction with complete and comprehensive arms control. Especially in recent weeks, substantial progress was made in disarmament. The scrapping of the Al Samoud missiles made headway: 70 of them have now been destroyed. And the regime in Baghdad is beginning, under pressure, to clear up the unanswered questions on VX and anthrax.

Iraq's readiness to cooperate was unsatisfactory. It was hesitant and slow. The Council agrees on that. But can this seriously be regarded as grounds for war with all its terrible consequences?

There is no doubt that, particularly in recent weeks, Baghdad has begun to cooperate more. The information Iraq has provided to UNMOVIC and the IAEA are steps in the right direction. Baghdad is meeting more and more of the demands contained in the Security Council resolutions. But why should we now — especially now — abandon our plan to disarm Iraq by peaceful means?

The majority of Security Council members believe that there are no grounds now for breaking off the disarmament process carried out under the supervision of the United Nations.

In this connection, I would like to make the following three points. First, the Security Council has not failed. We must counter that myth. The Security Council has made available the instruments to disarm Iraq peacefully. The Security Council is not responsible for what is happening outside the United Nations.

Secondly, we have to state clearly, under the current circumstances the policy of military intervention has no credibility. It does not have the support of our people. It would not have taken much to safeguard the unity of the Security Council. There is no basis in the United Nations Charter for regime change by military means.

Thirdly, we have to preserve the inspection regime and to endorse the working programme because we need both after the end of military action. Resolutions 1284 (1999) and 1441 (2002) are still in force, even if some adjustments are needed.

Germany is convinced that the United Nations and the Security Council must continue to play the central role in the Iraq conflict. This is crucial to world order and must continue to be the case in future. The United Nations is the key institution for the preservation of peace and stability and for the peaceful reconciliation of interests in the world of today and of tomorrow. There is no substitute for its functions as a guardian of peace.

The Security Council bears the primary responsibility for world peace and international security. The negotiations on the Iraq crisis, which were followed by millions of people worldwide during the last few weeks and months, have shown how relevant and how indispensable the peacemaking role of the Security Council is. There is no alternative to this.

We continue to need an effective international non-proliferation and disarmament regime. This can eliminate the risk of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, using the instruments developed in this process to make the world a safer place. The United Nations is the only appropriate framework for this. No one can seriously believe that disarmament wars are the way forward.

We are deeply concerned about the humanitarian consequences of a war in Iraq. Our task now is to do everything we possibly can to avert a humanitarian disaster. The Secretary-General is to present proposals on this. Yesterday, the Security Council declared its readiness to take up these proposals. Through the oil for food programme, the United Nations has provided 60 per cent of the Iraqi population with essential supplies. This experience must be used in the future.

A very large majority of people in Germany and Europe are greatly troubled by the impending war in Iraq. Our continent has experienced the horrors of war too often. Those who know our European history understand that we do not live on Venus but, rather, that we are the survivors of Mars. War is terrible. It is a great tragedy for those affected and for us all. It can only be the very last resort when all peaceful alternatives really have been exhausted.

Nevertheless, Germany has accepted the necessity of war on two occasions during the last few years because all peaceful alternatives had proved unsuccessful.

Germany fought side by side with its allies in Kosovo to prevent the mass deportation of the Albanian population and to avert an impending genocide. It did likewise in Afghanistan to combat the brutal and dangerous terrorism of the Taliban and Al Qaeda after the terrible and criminal attacks on the Government and the people of the United States. And we will stick to our commitment in this war against terror.

Today, however, we in Germany do not believe that there is no alternative to military force as a last resort. To the contrary, we feel that Iraq can be disarmed using peaceful means. We will, therefore, seize any opportunity, no matter how small, to bring about a peaceful solution.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call on Mr. de Villepin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of France.

Mr. De Villepin (France) (*spoke in French*): We are meeting here today, just a few hours before hostilities begin, to exchange our opinions once again in observance of our respective commitments, but also to outline together the path that must allow us to recover the spirit of unity.

I wish to reiterate here that for France, war can only be a last resort, while collective responsibility remains the rule. However much we may dislike Saddam Hussain's cruel regime, that holds true for Iraq and for every crisis that we will have to confront together.

To Mr. Blix, who introduced his work programme, and to Mr. ElBaradei, who was represented today, I wish to say thank you for the sustained efforts and the results achieved. Their programme reminds us that there is still a clear and credible prospect for disarming Iraq peacefully. It proposes and prioritizes the tasks involved in disarmament and presents a realistic timetable for their implementation.

In so doing, the report confirms what we knew all along. Yes, the inspections are producing tangible results. Yes, they offer the prospect of effective disarmament through peaceful means and in shorter time frames.

The path that we mapped out together in the context of resolution 1441 (2002) still exists. Although it is being interrupted today, we know that it will have to be resumed as soon as possible.

Two days ago, the Council took note of the Secretary-General's decision to withdraw the inspectors and all United Nations personnel from Iraq. The discharge of their mandates has therefore been suspended. It will be necessary, when the time comes, to complete our knowledge about Iraq's programmes and achieve the disarmament of Iraq. The inspectors' contribution at that time will be decisive.

Make no mistake about it — the choice before us is between two visions of the world.

To those who choose to use force and think that they can resolve the world's complexity through swift preventive action, we, in contrast, choose resolute action and a long-term approach, for in today's world, to ensure our security, we must take into account the manifold crises and their many dimensions, including the cultural and religious ones. Nothing enduring in

international relations can be built without dialogue and respect for the other, without strictly abiding by principles, especially for the democracies that must set the example. To ignore that is to run the risk of misunderstanding, radicalization and spiraling violence. That is especially true in the Middle East, an area of fractures and ancient conflicts, where stability must be a major objective for us.

To those who hope to eliminate the dangers of proliferation through armed intervention in Iraq, I would like to say that we regret the fact that they are depriving themselves of a key tool for resolving other similar crises. The Iraqi crisis has allowed us to craft an instrument, through the inspection regime, that is unprecedented and can serve as an example. Why not envision, on that basis, establishing an innovative, permanent structure — a disarmament body under the aegis of the United Nations?

To those who think that the scourge of terrorism will be eradicated through what is done in Iraq, we say that they run the risk of failing in their objectives. An outbreak of force in such an unstable area can only exacerbate the tensions and fractures on which terrorists feed.

Over and above our differences, we share a collective responsibility, in the face of these threats, to restore the unity of the international community. The United Nations must remain mobilized in Iraq to aid in that objective. In that regard, there are duties that we must assume together.

First, we must dress the wounds of war. As always, war brings its share of victims, suffering and displaced people. So it is a matter of urgency to prepare now to provide the required humanitarian assistance. This imperative must prevail over our differences. The Secretary-General has already begun to mobilize the various United Nations agencies. France will take part fully in the collective effort to assist the Iraqi people. The oil for food programme must be continued under the authority of the Security Council, with the necessary adjustments. We are awaiting the Secretary-General's proposals.

Next, it will be necessary to build peace. No single country has the means to build Iraq's future. Above all, no State can claim the necessary legitimacy. The legal and moral authority for such an undertaking can stem only from the United Nations. Two principles must guide our action: respect for the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq, and the preservation of its sovereignty.

Similarly, it will be up to the United Nations to establish a framework for the country's economic reconstruction — a framework that will have to affirm two complementary principles: transparency and the development of the country's resources for the benefit of the Iraqi people themselves.

Our mobilization must also extend to the other threats that we must address together.

Given the very nature of those threats, it is no longer possible today to address them in a casual order. To give an example, terrorism is fueled by organized crime networks; it cleaves to the contours of lawless areas; it thrives on regional crises; it garners support from the divisions in the world; and it uses all available resources, from the most rudimentary to the most sophisticated, from a knife to whatever weapons of mass destruction it can manage to acquire.

To deal with that reality, we must act in a united way and on all fronts at the same time. Therefore, we must remain constantly mobilized.

In that spirit, France renews its call for heads of State and Government to meet here in the Security Council to respond to the major challenges that we are confronting today.

Let us intensify our fight against terrorism. Let us fight mercilessly against its networks, with all the economic, legal and political weapons available to us.

Let us give new impetus to the fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. France has already proposed that our heads of State and Government meet on the sidelines during the next General Assembly to define together the new priorities for action.

Let us recover the initiative in the regional conflicts that are destabilizing entire regions; I am thinking in particular of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. How much suffering must the peoples of the region continue to endure before we force open the doors of peace? Let us not resign ourselves to an irreparable situation.

In a world where the threats are asymmetrical, where the weak defy the strong, the power of conviction, the capacity to persuade and the ability to change hearts count as much as the number of military

divisions. They cannot replace them, but they are the indispensable elements of a State's influence.

Given this new world, it is imperative that the international community's action be guided by principles.

The first is respect for law. The keystone of international order, it must apply under all circumstances, but even more so when it is a question of taking the gravest decision: to use force. Only on that condition can force be legitimate, and only on that condition can it restore order and peace.

Next is the defence of freedom and justice. We must not compromise on what is at the core of our values. We shall be listened to and heeded only if we are inspired by the very ideals of the United Nations.

Last is the spirit of dialogue and tolerance. Never before have the peoples of the world aspired so fervently to its respect. We must hear their appeal.

We see this clearly. Never has the United Nations been so necessary. It is up to this body to muster the resolve to meet these challenges, because the United Nations is the place where international law and legitimacy are founded and because it speaks on behalf of peoples.

To the clash of arms, a single upwelling of the spirit of responsibility — the voices and action of the international community gathered here in New York in the Security Council — must respond. That is in the interests of all: the countries engaged in the conflict, the States and the peoples of the region, the international community as a whole. Confronted by a world in crisis, we have the moral and political obligation to restore the lifelines of hope and unity.

The judgement of future generations will depend on our capacity to meet this great challenge, at the service of our values, at the service of our common destiny, at the service of peace.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Igor Ivanov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Ivanov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Security Council, by unanimously adopting resolution 1441 (2002), took upon itself the serious responsibility of completing the process of Iraq's disarmament. Today, members have before them the reports of the heads of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on the work accomplished and, in particular, their proposals as to what must be done in order to finally solve the problem of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. We have no doubt that UNMOVIC and the IAEA, which have deployed an effectively functioning inspection mechanism in Iraq, are in a position to carry out their tasks within a realistic time frame.

The reports submitted by Mr. Blix and by Mr. ElBaradei show convincingly that the international inspectors have succeeded in achieving tangible results. I shall not dwell on specific examples; they are well known. It is of fundamental importance that, thanks to the unity of the international community and to the joint pressure brought to bear on the Iraqi authorities — including a military presence in the region — Baghdad has fulfilled virtually every condition set by the inspectors and has not put up any kind of serious obstacle to their activities. Thus, we are in a position to state that the international inspectors — if they are given the opportunity to continue their work — have everything they need to complete the process of Baghdad's peaceful disarmament.

Therefore, the Security Council, as the body that bears primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, has fully shouldered its obligations by ensuring the deployment of international inspectors to Iraq and by establishing the conditions necessary for their activities. It is not by chance that even those who today cast doubt on the Council's role in an Iraqi settlement are forced to admit that they will have no other choice but to return this issue to the Council, which alone is authorized to deal with its comprehensive settlement.

Bearing all these considerations in mind, we believe that first, on behalf of the Security Council, we should express our highest regard for the activities of the international inspectors and should extend to them — as well as to the heads of UNMOVIC and of the IAEA, Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei — our support and our gratitude for the excellent work that they have accomplished.

Secondly, we should approve the reports submitted, which clearly set forth the current status of prohibited arms programmes in Iraq.

Thirdly, because of the difficult situation prevailing with regard to Iraq, we should take note of the Secretary-General's decision to withdraw the inspectors from Iraq because of the threat to their safety.

Fourthly, since the mandates of UNMOVIC and of the IAEA have not been fully implemented, the inspectors' work in Iraq has not been concluded but merely suspended. With a view to the further development of the situation, the Security Council must return to the issue of continuing this work, pursuant to resolutions 1284 (1999) and 1441 (2002).

We can only express regret that, at precisely the time when the prospect for Iraq's disarmament through inspections had become more than real, problems were put forward that have no direct bearing on resolution 1441 (2002) or on other United Nations decisions concerning Iraq. Not one of those decisions authorizes the right to use force against Iraq outside the Charter of the United Nations; not one of them authorizes the violent overthrow of the leadership of a sovereign State. Such actions, if they are undertaken, will not help to strengthen the unity of the international community at a time when the world sorely needs solidarity and united efforts, first and foremost, to repel such a real and universally shared threat as international terrorism.

Russia is convinced of the need to do everything possible, as soon as possible, in order to overcome the present crisis situation and to keep the Iraq problem within the framework of a political settlement, based solidly on the United Nations Charter and international law. Only in that way will we be able to ensure conditions for the continued, effective and multilateral cooperation needed to combat global threats and challenges, while retaining the central role of the United Nations Security Council.

On 11 September 2001, when the American people suffered a horrible tragedy, the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, was the first person to phone the United States President, George Bush, to extend solidarity and support to him. These were sincere feelings expressed by the entire Russian people.

If today we really had indisputable facts demonstrating that there was a direct threat from the territory of Iraq to the security of the United States of America, then Russia, without any hesitation, would be prepared to use the entire arsenal of measures provided under the United Nations Charter to eliminate such a threat. However, the Security Council today is not in possession of such facts. That is why we prefer a political settlement, relying on the activities of UNMOVIC and the IAEA, which enjoy the full trust of the international community.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Mr. Farouk Al-Shara', Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Al-Shara' (Syrian Arab Republic)(*spoke in Arabic*): At this critical and painful moment, I have nothing to say to the victims of the imminent war against Iraq, except for these words from the Preamble to the United Nations Charter:

> "We the peoples of the United Nations, determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, ... and to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, and to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security ...".

This is the most important commitment consecrated in the United Nations Charter 58 years ago. The rest are details.

I would like to remind our audience — here or there — that this Charter was signed in the United States of America, in the city of San Francisco, in 1945, and that this historic monument that hosts our deliberations was also built half a century ago in the United States of America, in the city of New York, one of the most densely populated cities in the world, and that the American people who live in the American continent between these two great cities — one overlooking the Pacific and the other overlooking the Atlantic — is in its plurality and diversity a microcosm of the international community, more so than any other country in the world.

This leads us to substantial issues, whether we are about to deal with the pressing issue of Iraq and its implications for the Middle East and the world, or whether we are about to discuss the forgotten Palestinian cause and its accumulated tragic consequences for the entire world.

The first question is: can the United States absolve itself and its ally, the United Kingdom, of the

responsibility that has befallen the two causes and their catastrophic consequences to date? History is the best witness — particularly the history of the United Nations.

The second question is: can the United States use the difficulty of arriving at constructive solutions to the two questions within the United Nations itself as a pretext and then blame failure on the Security Council? Whoever said that the Security Council's mission is to wage war, not to establish peace? Since when has making peace been an easy feat in any international crisis?

Within hours, a war of aggression will be unleashed in Iraq, as was declared yesterday in Washington. Emotions are running high — perhaps as high as the temperature over there. By now, anyone with vision and insight knows that this is an unfair and unjustified war. It will come back to haunt those who have advocated and promoted it, instead of enhancing their status in history.

This war is not being waged for a reasonable, let alone just, cause. While if war will be waged against Iraq to disarm it of its weapons of mass destruction, which do constitute a threat to its neighbours, Israel has a stockpile of such weapons, particularly nuclear weapons, unmatched even by some major Powers. No one ignores the threat that such weapons pose to its close, and not so close, neighbours. If the international monitoring and inspection processes are ineffective and unproductive in Iraq, then why is Israel the only country in the Middle East that rejects any international inspection or supervision of its weapons of mass destruction, if it does not possess such weapons, thereby laying to rest all allegations against it in this regard?

Syria voted in favour of Security Council resolution 1441 (2002). We were prompted to do so by our belief in supporting the international will to find a peaceful solution to the Iraqi crisis and to eliminate Iraqi weapons of mass destruction through peaceful means. Since the adoption of resolution 1441 (2002), the inspection process has yielded tangible results, due to positive and proactive Iraqi cooperation with the inspectors on procedure and substance. Indeed, on more than one occasion the inspectors said that they needed a few months, not a few years, to complete the tasks entrusted to them. However, we are now told that war is days, or hours, away. It is as if war were an inescapable fate, as if it were a popular demand in every part of the world rather than otherwise.

Syria wishes to express its extreme regret and concern at attempts by some to call into question the role of the Security Council in particular, and the United Nations in general, simply because they did not succeed in imposing their will and positions on the Council and the United Nations.

Our attention, and the attention of the majority of the countries of the world, has been drawn to the attempts by some to blame the Security Council — perhaps a particular member of the Council — for the failure to adopt a draft resolution authorizing military force against Iraq. Such attempts deliberately ignore the fact that the majority of the members of the Council rejected the idea of adopting a draft resolution authorizing the use of force, thus rendering the use of the veto unnecessary by any country.

With the unanimous adoption by the Security Council of resolution 1441 (2002), basic international terms of reference were set out to settle the Iraqi question. The verbatim record of meetings of the Security Council include comments by those members that are hastening to wage war against Iraq, confirming their belief that that resolution does not allow for international law to be circumvented or to permit a strike against Iraq without first reverting to the Security Council. We categorically oppose the views of those who have reneged on that resolution, particularly given that they are sure that Iraq has no weapons of mass destruction, as well as those who worked to deliberately discredit the contents of the resolution, in accordance with the infamous claim that the end justifies the means. That is particularly significant given that paragraph 12 of the resolution demands that the Security Council be convened in order to discuss any issue relevant to the implementation of the provisions of the resolution. Syria believes that ignoring that paragraph, demanding that inspectors be suddenly withdrawn from Iraq or that their work be suspended also makes it clear, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that the objective is not to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction, but to occupy it and usurp its natural resources, in contravention of all norms and laws.

Syria categorically rejects today the feverish calls for war against Iraq, just as in 1990 it rejected the occupation of Kuwait. Syria can find no legal or moral

justification for that destructive option, particularly outside the context of the Security Council. What logic could be used by the countries of the world to justify to their people the waging of a war, in contravention of international law and in grave and flagrant violation of the Charter, in order to pursue hidden objectives that give precedence to the law of the jungle over international legitimacy? Have not the United Nations inspectors confirmed, to the Council that Iraq has cooperated actively with them ever since the adoption of resolution 1441 (2002)? Have we not clearly seen the Iraqis destroy Al Samoud 2 missiles, in response to demands by the international inspectors? How can some deny that Iraq has provided plenty of evidence and document after document to prove that it is free from weapons of mass destruction? How many people throughout the world believe that Iraq represents a danger to the security of the United States and the American people? If such a claim were true or based on fact, we would have to consider that not just Iraq but more than 150 countries throughout the world also pose a threat to the security and integrity of the United States. There are active or sleeper Al Qaeda cells in those countries — a fact known to the United States Administration. Such countries also have a declared or undeclared class of weapons of mass destruction, according to the records of the specialized international agencies. Those records also indicate that the United States has the largest arsenal of those lethal weapons in the world.

If we consider both the letter and the spirit of the United States ultimatum, issued on Monday, we can only conclude that the objective of the war is the removal or the bringing to justice of an individual or a group of individuals. Is ensuring justice an objective corollary of the killing of tens of thousands of innocent Iraqis? Have we gone back to the Middle Ages, or are we truly in the twenty-first century?

Anyone in the world has the right to denounce such actions and to consider their negative results. The United States might choose to forget the assassinations and the carnage directed against the defenceless Palestinian people, but how can it choose to forget the fact that Rachel Corrie, an American peace activist, was recently crushed to death by Israeli bulldozers?

In conclusion, I would like to pay tribute to those States members of the Security Council that supported a peaceful resolution of the issue in the Council for their great sense of responsibility in very sincerely expressing the position of the majority of the members of the international community, regardless of race or creed. They also reflected the feelings of the millions who demonstrated, in thousands of cities all over the world, against war and in favour of peace. We are very appreciative of the principled position taken by those members of the Security Council, who chose to stand firmly in support of right and justice, regardless of the difficulties and challenges that might result, instead of succumbing to pressure or to short-term gains, to say nothing of threats of coercion.

We also express the hope that, in these last hours and minutes, the option of peace is still available, that wisdom and historic vision can prevail and right and justice be done to the benefit of the prosperity of the people of the Middle East and the world in general.

At this critical moment, Syria urges those concerned to shut down the machinery of war and to spare the lives of millions of innocent Iraqis as well as the lives of their new oppressors who are marching thousands of miles in their advanced armour, holding up the banner of liberation like a myth. Many people — including many Americans — have stood against the foreign occupier in defence of liberty and independence. That is the logic of history. That is the march of history — a march that will continue, no matter how many challenges and obstacles stand in the way.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): We are meeting today at a momentous and perhaps tragic point in world history. We are meeting as hopes for a peaceful solution of the Iraqi issue are about to end. There is no doubt that this is a sad moment for the Security Council and for the United Nations, whose primary vocation is peace.

War, as the Secretary-General recently stated, is always a catastrophe. It leads to major human tragedy. It was our hope that we could have secured the implementation of the resolutions of the Security Council so as to disarm Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction through peaceful means. Unfortunately, in its detailed discussions spanning several weeks, the Council could not find convergence on any of the proposals — either those on the table or those under informal consideration among its members. Pakistan has consistently advocated a peaceful solution. We have stressed that every possible avenue should be exhausted to secure a peaceful solution, and that the use of force must be the very last resort.

It is against that background that Pakistan anxiously awaited the conclusion of the work by the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) on its programme of work and on the document concerning its key remaining disarmament tasks. I am grateful to Mr. Blix for once again coming before the Council to present these documents. I also wish to thank Mr. ElBaradei, who has outlined the accomplishments of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) with respect to the Iraqi nuclear weapons capabilities. They have both done their work in a most thorough, professional and objective manner. The Council owes them a debt of gratitude.

We have carefully studied the programme of work and the 12 key remaining disarmament tasks identified by Mr. Blix and his team. We believe they could have provided a useful basis for the completion of the disarmament process in Iraq in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, if Iraq's full and unconditional cooperation could have been assured and obtained in time. It is regrettable that, in the situation as it has evolved, UNMOVIC and the IAEA will obviously find it difficult to pursue their responsibilities for the present time. Nevertheless, we agree that resolutions 1284 (1999) and 1441 (2002) remain in force and are relevant for the future.

We take cognizance of the decision by the Secretary-General, justified by the need to ensure the continued safety and security of United Nations personnel, to temporarily withdraw all United Nations personnel, including UNMOVIC and IAEA staff, from Iraq. We support the Secretary-General's decision. We believe that under the circumstances he had no choice other than to give priority to the safety and security of United Nations personnel. The Secretary-General has notified Council members that the activities of UNMOVIC and the IAEA, as well as other United Nations mandates, have been suspended de facto. We understand that necessity and await the time when conditions will allow United Nations personnel, including the inspectors, to resume and complete their tasks. Indeed, the long-term task of monitoring will require their return to Iraq. We presume that the present structures will therefore be kept intact.

The past few weeks have seen the whole world's attention riveted on the Security Council. Despite the best efforts we have all made, the Council was not in a position to traverse the path and to take everybody along. Members were separated by differences — and, we believe, by honest differences. In Pakistan's view, despite that inability to reach consensus, the Security Council remains relevant. The Council must uphold international legality, and it must do so equitably and consistently. It must seek to implement all its resolutions. In that regard, I would like to mention those relating to Palestine and, in particular, those relating to Jammu and Kashmir, where a people have been struggling and dying for the past 50 years. The Security Council is the embodiment of humanity's best hope for peace. We continue to repose confidence in that fact.

The changed circumstances that we are likely to face will no doubt reorder our priorities. Today the most urgent task before us is to decide how to address the humanitarian challenge that is likely to confront the world in the days to come. The withdrawal of United Nations humanitarian staff from Iraq and the suspension of the oil for food programme, as well as the outbreak of hostilities, could lead to a humanitarian crisis whose dimensions are as yet unclear. The Secretary-General intends to make proposals to the Council that we have all agreed to consider as soon as they are ready. Pakistan will do everything possible to ameliorate the suffering of our unfortunate brothers and sisters in Iraq. Pakistan will work closely with the Secretary-General and with Member States to ensure that the Iraqi people do not suffer any further. They have suffered enormously in the past. Any delay or procrastination that exacerbates their suffering would be doubly regrettable.

Pakistan believes that the time and space for diplomacy never ends. Even once the guns speak, it is the duty of the Security Council to restore peace and security, to contain conflict, to prevent the suffering of the Iraqi people and others in the region, to ensure the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq and its neighbours and to ensure the stability of this sensitive region of the world. Those are responsibilities that will not end; they will become more acute.

The Security Council's exertions during the past few weeks have revealed the divisions within the world and among the major Powers. But the process of healing the wounds that have opened here, and those that are about to be opened in the next days and weeks, is a task that can also be accomplished here, in the Security Council and in the United Nations.

Mr. Aguilar Zinser (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico regrets that we have not been able to reach an agreement in the Security Council to continue to work together on the task of disarming Iraq. Nevertheless, those differences should not be an obstacle to the Council's continued fulfilment of its mandate and of its assumption of its responsibilities with regard to peace and security in the world.

As President Vicente Fox said in his message to the nation on 17 March, Mexico upholds a multilateral approach to conflict resolution and deplores the path of war. The world, as the President of Mexico stated, "must continue to advocate solutions that are in keeping with the spirit and letter of the Charter of the United Nations. The Charter establishes that the use of force must always be a last and exceptional recourse, which can only be justified when all other means have failed to produce results."

The Security Council is the only organ to which the international community, whose will was expressed in the Charter signed in San Francisco, has entrusted the right to use force. As the President of Mexico said, "In the present circumstances, what is at stake is the very manner in which humanity is to handle matters as pressing as disarmament and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, which our country has always considered to be tremendously important."

I represent here a State and a nation that is deeply peace-loving. The people of Mexico cherish peace and have given its representatives a mandate to pursue it at all times and in all circumstances. Mexico's strength is based on our principles, which reflect the lessons learned from history. In essence, they express our interests, and it is as a function of them that we participate in the debates in the Council, that we present our points of view and that we fully shoulder our responsibilities. The touchstone of these principles is the peaceful settlement of disputes and disarmament. These are the principles that lend momentum to the multilateral avocation of our foreign policy.

It is in this light that Mexico believes deeply in the reason for the existence of the United Nations, because it reflects the hopes for peace and conviviality and peaceful coexistence of millions of human beings. The United Nations is the forum par excellence where representatives of all States can meet, come to an agreement and take collective decisions to preserve and restore peace, where necessary, to face humanitarian crises, help refugees, protect humanity from terrible diseases such as AIDS, protect the environment, work for sustainable development and fight for and preserve the rights of women or children or the disabled. Our Organization has the strength and the legitimacy to discharge all these mandates. This is something to be protected, strengthened and enhanced.

Mexico joins the efforts of the Secretary-General to update the structure and methods of work of our Organization to make the United Nations a system that is increasingly relevant and effective and to ensure that its responses will always be timely, appropriate and relevant in order to combat poverty and marginalization, which are the underlying causes of hatred and violence.

Throughout the process of disarming Iraq, since resolution 1441 (2002) was adopted, Mexico has expressed its trust in the United Nations Monitoring, Inspection and Verification Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We would like to express our confidence in them once again. This is the most robust, dynamic and effective effort at peaceful disarmament that has ever been attempted. We are convinced that with this instrument and the mandate it had, the United Nations could have brought about the peaceful disarmament of Iraq.

My country feels that this is no time for recriminations. We now must analyse from the Council's perspective the tasks that lie ahead. We must do so with a clear sense of collective responsibility and a clear understanding of the challenges that we face. The first will be coping with the humanitarian situation in Iraq and, if the war does take place, with the reconstruction of the country. We fully trust in the leadership and capacities of the Secretary-General. He will have to propose the paths and actions that we will then have to authorize here in the Council. The responsibility for complying with existing United Nations mandates in Iraq requires that the Council take action immediately to restore the mandates that had been blocked or suspended.

Mexico is a full participant in the combat against terrorism. We have undertaken responsibilities here. We have taken all kinds of measures to prevent this scourge and to attack it. Fundamentally, and these are our principles, we are all united.

Mr. Negroponte (United States of America): At the outset of today's discussion, I would like to

recognize and commend the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors, and Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei, for their efforts to implement the inspection regime envisioned by this body under exceptionally difficult circumstances.

We are relieved to know that all of the UNMOVIC and IAEA personnel have been safely evacuated from Iraq.

Regrettably, discussion of the topic on today's agenda, the consideration of the draft programmes of work, is incompatible with Iraq's non-compliance with resolution 1441 (2002) and the current reality on the ground. The UNMOVIC programme of work itself declares that the programme "is predicated on the assumption that Iraq will provide immediate, unconditional and active cooperation."

That is precisely what has been manifestly lacking. No realistic programme of work or outline of key unresolved issues can be developed pursuant to resolution 1284 (1999) while Iraq fails to cooperate fully, actively and unconditionally, nor can it be developed absent sound information on Iraqi programmes since 1998 and all other information that is lacking.

The fact of the matter is that the situation on the ground will change, and so will the nature of the remaining disarmament tasks. Considering a work programme at this time is quite simply out of touch with the reality that we confront.

We acknowledge the effort that has gone into producing the draft programmes of work. While they cannot be definitive, they and the paper on key remaining disarmament tasks make clear the multitude of important issues that Iraq has avoided addressing. These are the kinds of documents that we would have been able to discuss if Iraq had met the requirements of resolution 1441 (2002), but they cannot now lead us to the results that this Council demanded: the immediate peaceful disarmament of Iraq.

Under current circumstances we have no choice but to set this work aside for the time being. That said, we do not exclude the possibility that it may prove useful to return to those documents at some time in the future.

In the meantime, the Council will face new challenges related to the future of Iraq. While I have the floor, I would like to touch briefly on an issue that was raised in our consultations yesterday: the concern my country shares with other members of the Council for meeting the humanitarian needs of the people of Iraq in this time. This is an issue to which my Government has dedicated significant resources. We have been planning across all relevant United States Government agencies and in support of United Nations efforts to anticipate likely requirements and to be prepared to administer necessary relief as quickly as possible. We have also consulted with interested Governments, regional and international organizations, civil society and, of course, the United Nations.

We are fielding the largest ever Disaster Assistance Response Team, known as DART, composed of United States civilian humanitarian experts, to the region to assess needs, to liase with partners and to provide in-field grant-making capacity. We have pre-positioned $16.5 million worth of food rations and relief supplies, including water and purification materials, blankets and shelter supplies in the region.

In addition, we have contributed over $60 million to more than a dozen different United Nations agencies, including the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization, as well as a multitude of non-governmental organizations. As we increase United States contributions, we also urge other donors to contribute to these critical efforts.

As President Bush has said, we recognize the critical importance of keeping the oil for food programme running to meet the humanitarian needs of the people of Iraq. Working with others in the Council, we are prepared to present soon a draft humanitarian resolution that would ensure the continuity of the programme. We have begun consulting with the United Nations and other Council members on adjustments to the current oil for food programme that will ensure the continued delivery of key humanitarian supplies, particularly food and medicine, to Iraq. We trust that other members of the Council share our objective, and the objective of the Secretary-General, of resuming the flow of humanitarian goods through the oil for food programme as soon as possible. We hope that progress

on this resolution will be swift in order to minimize any interruption of the programme.

Mr. President, we look forward to working with you and our colleagues on issues relating to the situation in Iraq in the days and weeks to come.

Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon)(*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes the holding of this open meeting, which bears witness to the will of the Security Council to continue to play the role conferred upon it by the Charter: the maintenance of international peace and security.

We are fully aware of the exceptional situation in which we now find ourselves at this late hour. The Council, because it was unable to reach a compromise among its members, is now at a crossroads. Some among us hoped for a miracle until the very last moment. We have to recognize that the collective burst of activity so greatly hoped for and called for did not happen. Who is responsible? Each and everyone one of us, undoubtedly.

On 17 March 2003, we were confronted with a challenge to the maintenance of international peace and security. Because we all are wrong to some extent, we all are also right to some extent. Retrospectively, that was the merit of resolution 1441 (2002), but unfortunately it was also its weakness.

The conjunction of factors that ultimately escaped our attention have led to what is apparently the failure of the diplomatic approach and initiatives, because whatever our position is, the result lies before us.

The peaceful disarmament of Iraq by means of inspections based on immediate, unconditional, full and active cooperation ended, at least temporarily, with yesterday's departure from Baghdad for Cyprus of the inspectors of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Cameroon would like to pay homage to them for their professionalism, commitment and objectivity. They have fully justified the trust placed in them. I would also like to thank Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei for their leadership. Despite that suspension, I am convinced that at some point in the process the Council will entrust them with new tasks, whether in this context or elsewhere.

My delegation has examined with interest, despite the exceptional circumstances surrounding our meeting, the programme of work prepared by Mr. Blix and the UNMOVIC team. The document would have been a good basis for work. Nevertheless, after reading the 12 key disarmament tasks, we wish to say that even if some progress was made since 27 November 2002, when inspections began, obviously much remained to be done. My delegation does not see how the inspectors would have achieved their heavy task in the absence of full, active and unconditional cooperation.

This morning we find ourselves in a completely different situation. Of course we wish that, a few hours from now, the unexpected would happen. Of course we would like to see our cohesion and unity restored by the end of the day. If scepticism is winning over us the optimists, it is because of what we see, what we hear and what we perceive.

I say to myself, let us reflect on the measures necessary to minimize the humanitarian impact of a possible conflict on the population, in particular on women and children.

The oil for food programme has been suspended de facto since the humanitarian personnel stationed in Iraq were recalled. Cameroon understands and approves the Secretary-General's decision to remove the entire United Nations staff from Iraq at this troubled time. But Cameroon is also very concerned about the effect of that measure on the Iraqi populations. We would be happy to have firm assurances in this matter.

This brings to mind other consequences, particularly as regards the providers of the humanitarian programme, other service providers, on United Nations personnel, and so forth. This problem must also arise for the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

That is why Cameroon suggests that the sanctions Committee established by resolution 661 (1990) meet as soon as possible at the level of Permanent Representatives, on the basis of proposals to be made by the Secretary-General, the oil for food programme and UNMOVIC, so that it can adopt any emergency measures needed at the humanitarian level.

It seems too soon for us to analyse the impact of current events on collective security and on the future capacity of the Security Council to manage major

conflicts and the new threats that burden our twenty-first century society.

Cameroon harbours great hope that trust will soon be revived among us, and that differences brought on by the Iraqi crisis, however deep, will just be a temporary episode.

Cameroon, a ward of the United Nations, has faith in our Organization. The United Nations is the framework, the only framework, which reassures and protects us.

Mr. Arias (Spain) *(spoke in Spanish)*: We have heard the briefings of Mr. Blix of UNMOVIC, and Mr. Zlauvinen, representative of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), on their respective work programmes established under resolution 1284 (1999). Once again, my Government wishes to thank the heads of both inspection teams for their efforts and to commend the work of the teams they lead.

The inspections have been suspended. And Saddam Hussain is responsible for that situation. Through his ongoing policy of deceit, concealment and delaying tactics, he has decided to openly opt for the path of confrontation, contravening the interests of his people and the demands of the Security Council. He alone is ultimately responsible for the strong increase in diplomatic, political and military tensions produced in recent days, and he alone will be responsible for facing the grave consequences to which resolution 1441 (2002) refers.

The work programme submitted to us for our approval is part of the inspections paradigm established in resolution 1284 (1999), adopted by the Council in 1999. However, we must be clear. Through the unanimous adoption of resolution 1441 (2002), the dynamic is no longer the same.

Spain has made arduous efforts at all levels to contribute to a peaceful resolution of the Iraqi crisis. To that end, it submitted, together with the United States and Great Britain, a draft resolution designed to ratchet up the pressure on the Iraqi regime and which, in fact, offered Saddam Hussain another opportunity to adopt the strategic decision to cooperate fully, immediately and unconditionally with the inspectors.

Spain understands, and it has demonstrated that since it became a member of the Council, that a new resolution, even if it were politically desirable, would not be legally necessary.

Indeed, the legitimate recourse to the use of force to disarm Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction is based on the logical linking of resolutions 660 (1990), 678 (1990), 687 (1991) and 1441 (2002), adopted pursuant to Chapter VII of the Charter.

Resolution 660 (1990) considered the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait a breach of the peace and international security. Therefore, at that time, the Security Council determined, for the first time, that Iraq not only constituted a threat to peace and international security, but also that it was in breach of the peace and international security.

Iraq did not comply with that demand of the Council, which requested, in its second resolution, that Member States use all means necessary to make Iraq comply with resolution 660 (1990). An international coalition, under that mandate, intervened militarily and restored international legality.

Resolution 687 (1991) declared a ceasefire, subordinating it to compliance with a number of conditions. The majority of them demanded the disarmament of weapon of mass destruction. They also referred to humanitarian matters, terrorism and the payment of war reparations. With the exception of the last issue, the remaining conditions were not met.

Iraq has provided cover to terrorists and has recently boasted of training suicide teams. Saddam Hussain's regime has not returned all those who disappeared or were taken prisoner. It continues to fail to provide information, in a clear, complete and authentic manner, on the whereabouts of its weapons and its programmes for weapons of mass destruction. Let us recall that paragraph 9 of resolution 687 (1991) demanded that Iraq present to the Secretary-General, within a period of 15 days, a detailed report on the locations and characteristics of all its weapons of mass destruction. Twelve years later that information still has not been provided in a comprehensive manner, as demanded by the Council.

Resolution 687 (1991), therefore, left in abeyance resolution 678 (1990), which authorized the use of force. It left it in abeyance, but it did not abolish it. The content of resolution 678 (1990) continues to be perfectly valid, and that is recalled in resolution 1441 (2002), unanimously adopted by the Council four and a half months ago.

Resolution 1441 (2002) recognizes that Iraq's non-compliance with the Council's resolutions constitutes a threat to international peace and security, it recalls that these have not been restored in the region — I am using the language of the resolution — and it decides that Iraq has failed to comply and continues to fail to comply most seriously with the demands imposed by the international community.

In accordance with the provisions of the Council's most recent resolution, I repeat, the Council has not met just once, but rather many times, to examine successive reports of the inspectors. Iraq has still not complied with the will of the international community, as has been demanded of it. Therefore, peace and international security continue unassured.

Finally, my country would have sincerely preferred for us to have met here under very different circumstances, in order to adopt the UNMOVIC and IAEA work programmes and to take note of their implementation, on the basis of the genuine and full cooperation of the Iraqi regime, and to set new timetables for Iraqi disarmament. However, unfortunately, that scenario has not materialized.

The commendable work of the inspectors, which Spain values and supports, is part of a system that has demonstrated its effectiveness in enormously diverse countries and circumstances. However, the system of inspections has always had an inescapable prerequisite: the full, active and immediate cooperation of the party being inspected. For 12 years, Saddam Hussain has not wanted or provided such cooperation.

In conclusion, the humanitarian dimension concerns us. We believe that measures must be taken to alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people. We hope to receive more information from the Secretary-General, and we support the initiative of submitting a draft resolution on humanitarian issues.

Mr. Valdés (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We have had a bitter briefing on the work programme for Iraq, presented to us by the inspectors. One can read only with sorrow what might have been when what might have been was peace. Everyone in this Chamber knows that Chile hoped that this inspections programme would be carried out. Our Government consulted social organizations and political parties spanning the ideological spectrum that makes up our democracy. Our National Congress almost unanimously adopted the option for peace.

Chile had the conviction, which we reaffirm here today, that the inspections programme — strengthened, zealous and investigative, carried to its logical conclusion and accompanied by growing and persistent military pressure — was capable of achieving the objective that the international community wished for: the peaceful disarmament of Iraq. That was what led us, up to the last moment, to propose formulas for Council agreement.

To achieve that purpose, the Council and the Governments that constitute it should have built up an attitude of persistence in the task of inspections and should have made them daily more incisive. We needed to make clear to the regime of Saddam Hussain that the United Nations would move towards the disarmament of Iraq at any cost. The Council should have cultivated its internal unity — a convergence of its perceptions — but, above all, it should have considered that the objective of disarmament was as valuable as the objective of peace.

That was not possible. We fear that the consequences will be serious for humanity. The Iraqi regime never understood the dimension of its lethargy and did not appreciate the gravity of the punishment to which it was exposing its own people. Perhaps it had only begun to understand when it was already too late. To set out the demands and the disciplines that the situation in Iraq required, the Council was unable to find among its members the flexibility needed to set deadlines and to define a path of collective action that would have enabled it to shoulder the responsibilities entrusted to it by the Charter of the United Nations. Today, every one of us must assume his part of the responsibility. The time will come when the fruit of our actions will be made evident.

Today is not the time for recriminations. We believe that we should now commend the role that the inspectors of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have played in this story. We should like to pay tribute to Mr. Hans Blix and to Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei and to the members of their work teams. Immersed in a challenge characterized by technical complexity and political tension, they knew how to extract the truth that they came across in order to bring it to the Security Council, boldly recounting at this table the way in which their inspections process was

starting to overcome Iraqi resistance and to show substantive instances of disarmament.

Nothing could be more serious today than suspending the inspections process. That could create doubts concerning the validity of this instrument for international peace and security. If confidence in disarmament institutions erodes, those institutions will lose their value and will no longer be a guarantor of peace, which is their ultimate purpose.

Chile today reaffirms its commitment to what the General Assembly, in its first special session on disarmament, declared 25 years ago:

> "Genuine and lasting peace can only be created through the effective implementation of the security system provided for in the Charter of the United Nations and the speedy and substantial reduction of arms and armed forces, by international agreement and mutual example, leading ultimately to general and complete disarmament under effective international control." (*General Assembly resolution S-10/2, para. 13*)

We take note of this report on the UNMOVIC work programme, prepared in accordance with paragraph 7 of resolution 1284 (1999), with the purpose of emphasizing the value of the arms inspection process conducted by the United Nations. At this very difficult moment, we reaffirm our faith in the Organization and in the Security Council. Chile will resolutely defend international law and the principles established in the Charter of the United Nations. In the coming weeks, we should like to dedicate ourselves, loyally and constructively, to facing the horrific cost that the war will bring to millions of Iraqis.

The Security Council, committed, as the Charter says, to preserving peace, must now work tirelessly, inspired by the objective of preserving life and restoring peace. Perhaps if we do everything that we can and save as many lives as we can, the millions of people in the world who have now lost faith in our capacity to make the world a civilized place may again lend their inspiration to our tasks.

Mr. Helder Lucas (Angola): At the outset, on behalf of the Angolan delegation, I should like to express our thanks and our recognition to the Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), Mr. Hans Blix; to the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei; and to their personnel, who have been working on the Iraq disarmament inspections. Indeed, the commitment that they have shown in fulfilling the task entrusted to them by the Security Council, their competence and their dedication deserve our recognition.

We deplore the fact that the inspectors were unable to complete their task of disarming Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction, and we also deplore the fact that Iraq was unable to seize the last opportunity afforded it by the Security Council. Angola made repeated pleas to Iraq to cooperate fully and honestly with the United Nations in complying with the Council resolutions relating to its unconditional disarmament — particularly resolution 1441 (2002) — and to convince the international community as a whole that it was making genuine and determined efforts to disarm.

In the diplomatic process of trying to find a peaceful settlement to the Iraqi crisis in the Security Council, Angola consistently defended a peaceful solution to the conflict and reiterated that the use of force should always be a last resort. We also expressed the position that the decision to be adopted should be within the United Nations framework in order to count on the international community's full support. This position was based on our awareness that we derived from our long experience of four decades of conflict in Angola and of war's extremely negative impact on society and populations.

Angola also has advocated the principle of safeguarding the Security Council's primacy as the most appropriate mechanism for regulating crisis situations and for imposing international law through compliance with its resolutions. For this to happen, we always have defended the necessity of the Council's unity so that the final settlement of the Iraqi crisis could count on the full support of the international community.

The main concern of the Angolan Government at this moment when a diplomatic solution seems definitely excluded, and war an inevitability, concerns the immediate humanitarian consequences that war will surely engender. Our main preoccupations are with the innocent people, who will endure a huge sacrifice, and for whom it is necessary to do something. It is our

belief that the international community should mobilize all its efforts and resources in order to assist the civilian populations when the conflict is over. Moreover, it is our expectation that the Security Council will remain seized of the matter and that it will play its role, together with the entire United Nations system, in facing the immense tasks of the post-conflict period for the political, social and economic reconstruction of Iraq.

Mr. Wang Yingfan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, I wish to thank Mr. Blix for his statement. I also wish to thank him and the representative of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for the work programme submitted today.

The United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the IAEA strived to submit this work programme as early as possible. Today they have done so, ahead of the schedule provided for in resolution 1284 (1999). Yet, due to rapidly developing events, our efforts have fallen behind.

The inspections have been suspended and the inspectors are on their way home. In spite of all this, today's meeting still holds special significance. It demonstrates that the Council, all along, has attached great importance to inspections. This work programme includes key remaining disarmament tasks, questions to be answered and obligations to be implemented by Iraq in order for these tasks to be accomplished. This programme, if implemented, will surely make the inspections more organized and more targeted and will help enhance the effectiveness of the inspections.

In the light of the recent progress made in the inspections, we believe that it is possible to achieve the goal of disarming Iraq through peaceful means. We should not put an end to the road to peaceful disarmament. Here, I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation and thanks to the inspectors for their effective work under arduous conditions. Our appreciation and thanks also go to Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei, who have discharged the mandate conferred on them by the Council in an active, rigorous and professional manner.

The situation in Iraq is indeed worrisome. We express our utmost regret and disappointment at this situation: war may break out at any moment. We express our utmost concern for the humanitarian situation in Iraq and for peace and security in the region.

The Chinese people are a peace-loving people. The Chinese Government has always independently pursued a foreign policy of peace. No matter where in the world, we will do all we can to avert conflict, to avert war, so long as there remains a glimmer of hope of maintaining peace, for winning over peace. Together with Council members and vast numbers of Member States, we are ready and will continue to pay close attention to the Iraqi issue.

The Council bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. No matter what the circumstances may be, the Council must shoulder its responsibility in earnest so as not to let down the expectations of the vast numbers of Member States and the international community.

Mr. Tafrov (Bulgaria) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Bulgarian delegation, I would like to thank Mr. Hans Blix for the briefing he has just given us. I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for the excellent work done thus far, and this in spite of difficult circumstances and conditions. Bulgaria confirms its support for the activities of UNMOVIC, under Mr. Blix, as well as that of the IAEA, under its Director General, Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, and their teams.

The obvious suspension of the inspectors' work should not call into question the usefulness of inspections in general. In future, the inspections will remain a necessary tool for the United Nations in order to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction everywhere throughout the world.

It is clear that the instrument of inspections is truly effective only with the existence of full and active cooperation on the part of the country and Government concerned. My delegation is grateful to Mr. Blix for having submitted the work programme, before the deadline, on the key remaining disarmament tasks for Iraq under resolution 1284 (1999). The work programme continues to be under study by my authorities, and we reserve the right to give our view on the programme as soon as this study has been concluded.

Bulgaria sincerely regrets that diplomatic efforts at disarming Iraq peacefully have not yielded the desired results. Throughout recent months, Bulgaria

has defended a clear-cut and consistent position within the Council, the objective of which was the full implementation of resolution 1441 (2002).

My country has done its utmost to find a peaceful solution to the crisis between the Security Council and Iraq, and this through a reasonable compromise along the various approaches we had in the Security Council with a view to preserving its unity.

Now, since all the political possibilities for disarming Iraq have been exhausted, we confirm our position that, in refusing to cooperate fully, actively and without condition with the inspectors, Iraq has failed to seize its last chance to comply with the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 1441 (2002).

Bulgaria unreservedly supports the position of Secretary-General Kofi Annan to withdraw all United Nations staff from Iraq, including the UNMOVIC and IAEA inspectors, in order to ensure their safety. We very much regret the fact that, while there was a consensus on our objective in the Council — that is, the disarmament of Iraq — differences as to means and a timetable for the carrying out of this objective have not enabled the Council to take a common approach.

Ensuring that we have a calm debate in the Security Council is crucial at this difficult time. Dialogue must be fully restored and the unity of the Council re-established. In this context, the statements that we have heard this morning lead us to believe that the resumption of dialogue has already begun. We must now focus on the most important issue. The most urgent and important matter now, which should be the focus of the Council's concerns at this serious time, is the humanitarian situation in Iraq. Like other delegations, we call on all States members of the Council to work together to support the efforts of the international community in providing assistance to the civilian population of Iraq.

Even though my delegation deeply regrets the events of recent days, Bulgaria reaffirms its determination to continue to make a contribution to the preservation of the role of the United Nations in international relations. Bulgaria, which is dedicated to the principle of multilateralism, is convinced that the Security Council must preserve its essential role in the maintenance of international peace and security throughout the world, as set forth in the Charter. The Council should play an important role in the post-conflict reconstruction of Iraq.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock (United Kingdom): I underline the United Kingdom's deep regret that it has not been possible for the Council to find an agreed way forward on Iraq. The United Kingdom tried as hard as any member of the Security Council to achieve that. In spite of that regret, which I know we all share, we should not forget what brought us to this point: the fundamental failure of Iraq to disarm in the face of 12 years of demands, pressure and pleas from the Security Council and from virtually the whole of the international community. If Iraq had made a genuine effort — that indispensable factor — to close outstanding issues of substance at any time in the past decade, particularly after resolution 1441 (2002) afforded it the final opportunity to do so, and if Iraq had respected the United Nations, we would not be where we are. I repeat what British ministers have made clear: any action which the United Kingdom has to take in this matter will be in accordance with international law and based on relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

Whatever the present divisions and resentments, we the Security Council, we the United Nations, have a central role to play on Iraq and on the wider issues associated with it. In that regard, on 17 March the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs expressed the interest of the United Kingdom in Security Council action affirming Iraq's territorial integrity, ensuring rapid delivery of humanitarian relief, allowing for the earliest possible lifting of United Nations sanctions, promoting an international reconstruction programme and allocating the use of all oil revenues for the benefit of the people of Iraq. These are issues on which members of the Council have voiced similar concerns. We will share our ideas on continuing the oil for food programme in the interests of the people of Iraq and on ensuring rapid humanitarian provision. I hope that, together, and with the active contribution of the Secretary-General, we can make rapid progress on this crucial area. The Secretary of State for International Development of the United Kingdom is visiting New York today, at the request of the Prime Minister, to discuss these issues with the Secretary-General. The British Government has already set aside about $110 million for immediate humanitarian provision if there is a conflict, and is likely to announce further funding.

The United Kingdom continues to see an important role for the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in verifying the disarmament of Iraq and in carrying out longer-term monitoring. We warmly commend the inspectors for their professional work in Iraq since the passage of resolution 1441 (2002). They bear none of the responsibility for the evolution of events. We note the respective work programmes and the key tasks which Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei have put before us. Equally, we note that without a cooperating Iraqi Government, as resolution 1284 (1999) and resolution 1441 (2002) make abundantly clear, it would never be possible to be confident of the key tasks or of making progress on them. We should encourage UNMOVIC and the IAEA to keep both documents under review. A more definitive work programme will be possible when there is an administration in Iraq which is prepared to cooperate fully, actively and unconditionally and when there is a secure situation on the ground.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guinea.

The eyes of the international community are today on the Security Council, whose fundamental mission is the preservation of international peace and security. It is in that context that for the past several months the Security Council has continued to undertake initiatives, with a view to disarming Iraq, the most significant of which were the unanimous adoption of resolution 1441 (2002); the holding of several ministerial meetings; the convening of public debates open to all Member States; and many private consultations. My delegation deeply regrets that, in spite of those efforts, the Council was not able to arrive at a common position on this question.

In this regard, we take note of the work programme just submitted by Mr. Blix and the representative of the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, setting out, inter alia, the key remaining disarmament tasks for Iraq. We thank them for that. We also note the decision of the Secretary-General to withdraw inspectors from Iraq for reasons of security. This new situation, of course, makes the mission inoperative for the time being.

But must we conclude that there is no room for hope? Guinea, for its part, ventures to believe in the possibility of safeguarding peace and attaining our common objective: the complete disarmament of Iraq. My delegation believes that if armed conflict is inevitable, it would be desirable for appropriate steps to be taken to spare the civilian population and limit the destruction of the economic and social infrastructure. Similarly, humanitarian questions should be of concern to us all. In this connection, my delegation agrees in advance to any proposal to be made by the Secretary-General on action to be undertaken in order to cope with the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people.

My delegation understands the moral necessity of considering, pursuant to international treaties and disarmament programmes, the need to rid the world of the uncontrolled use of weapons of mass destruction. History provides sufficient evidence that such action will preserve our collective security.

At this particularly difficult moment, my country renews its determination to work together with other members to continue dialogue, which is the only way to restore the unity of our body. Such unity is the very basis of the credibility of the Security Council. It is more than ever necessary in order to enable it effectively to carry out its mission of preserving international peace and security.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I call on the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Aldouri (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express my appreciation to the permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council for their efforts aimed at reaching a peaceful resolution to the current crisis, which was created by the United States, the United Kingdom and Spain, with the intention of launching a hostile war against Iraq and occupying it under the pretext of the presence in Iraq of weapons of mass destruction. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Secretary-General for the sincere and peaceful efforts he has made, and continues to make. We hope that he will be able to continue with those efforts.

We have heard three or four discordant voices calling for war in the course of many meetings in this Chamber. At the same time, many other voices — responding to the international community and human conscience, as well as to the principles of truth, justice

and the Charter of the United Nations — have called for peace.

For the record, and for the sake of historical accuracy, as well as to reassure every State that has recently made active efforts to maintain peace and to prevent war, we would like to reiterate that Iraq no longer possesses weapons of mass destruction. The presence of such weapons has been relegated to the past. Iraq decided in 1991 to destroy the weapons it had produced. That action stemmed from the conviction underlying Iraq's policy to rid itself of such weapons. Proof of this fact lies in the failure by the United States and Britain to prove any allegation that Iraq has possessed such weapons in recent years, and especially during the period following the adoption of resolution 1441 (2002).

I would sincerely like to thank international inspectors for the relentless efforts they have made. I would also like to thank Mr. Blix and Mr. Elbaradei for their distinguished work, which has been characterized by neutrality and objectivity.

With regard to weapons of mass destruction, I would like to say that the inspectors have refuted all the misleading information that was presented by the United States and Britain. They proved that information to be false, including the information that the Secretary of State of the United States worked so arduously to put before the Council as damning evidence. After the failure of those two countries to provide even a shred of evidence, and after they realized that the world was beginning to understand the truth, namely, that Iraq was free of weapons of mass destruction, those countries decided to expose their real goals and intentions, that is, to occupy Iraq and to control its oil wells. That is the only truth; no other exists. The coming days will prove the reality of that truth. But by then it will be too late.

I do not wish to dwell in detail on the report of Mr. Blix that is before the Council, which pertains to the main disarmament tasks. Suffice it to say that Iraq had been requesting that report for a long time. Iraq put forth quite a bit of advanced information within the context of the tasks being discussed by the Council today. Iraq therefore welcomes the report, and will do its utmost to complete those tasks as soon as possible and to answer every question raised in the report. In a telephone conversation I had this morning with General Amer Al-Saadi, who is the person in Iraq responsible for this issue, I was told that Iraq had finalized two important reports that it plans to hand over to the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC). The first report, which runs about 80 pages, concerns anthrax. The second, which pertains to unmanned planes, will be delivered to UNMOVIC as soon as we receive it from Iraq. There are currently difficulties in communicating with the country.

At this difficult time, I feel compelled to draw the Council's attention to the reality of what is already a dire humanitarian situation, which is due to an unjust embargo maintained in particular by the United Kingdom and the United States, and to the delay in receiving humanitarian supplies under the oil for food programme. That situation will further deteriorate, in spite of the fact that the Iraqi authorities are currently — and shall be for a reasonable period — able to meet basic needs for food and medicine. However, food and medicine alone are not enough. Electricity, potable water, sewage treatment, communications and other essential needs that cannot be stored or distributed will be affected or, as was the case in 1991, destroyed. That will lead to a real humanitarian catastrophe. Human beings cannot live by bread and medicine alone, as the United States and the United Kingdom would wish the people of Iraq to do. The Security Council and the Secretary-General will therefore have a direct responsibility if war breaks out.

I do not wish to comment about what the Permanent Representative of the United States has said about the humanitarian situation in Iraq and about the great generosity demonstrated by the United States of America and the scores of millions of dollars dedicated to saving the Iraqi people, which they do not need. The executioner cannot help the victim, except by killing him. That is what the United States wants for the Iraqi people; and that is what it is working for.

The direct humanitarian effects of the military attack will mean tens of thousands of causalities and the complete destruction of the country's infrastructure. I would like to recall here that the United States and the United Kingdom have made commitments to rebuild the infrastructure that they are about to destroy either today or tomorrow. This is, of course, cause for sincere joy to all. Epidemics and diseases will also spread.

It is regrettable that this will take place at a time when the work of all specialized United Nations agencies in Iraq has ceased in the fields of health, education, food relief, environmental protection and other humanitarian activities. The personnel in those fields have been withdrawn. We need such personnel at a time of crisis and war, not during peacetime. The oil for food programme has nonetheless been suspended and its entire international staff has been withdrawn in record time. This is truly astonishing. The decision to withdraw the inspectors so swiftly paves the way for the United States and the United Kingdom to carry out acts of military aggression against Iraq much faster than was expected.

Hence, my delegation believes that in order to minimize the magnitude of the expected humanitarian catastrophe — and the tens of millions of dollars so generously offered by the United States and the United Kingdom will not be enough to cope with it — the Council has no choice but to renew expeditiously the work of the oil for food programme, especially given that delaying the agreed-upon shipment of humanitarian goods on their way to Iraq, amounting to more than $10 billion, will have dire consequences, especially in areas related to food, medicine and basic civilian needs.

In light of the imminent dangers facing Iraq, the region and the world, I do not believe that members of the Council and the Secretary-General need to be reminded of their responsibilities under the Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security, especially in the event of a threat to or breach of peace or an act of aggression. This is precisely what is happening now.

The prospect of an attack against Iraq by the United States and the United Kingdom is almost certain. It might well occur within hours from now. This fact should compel the Council to immediately take the necessary steps to ensure international peace and security, particularly after the United States, in the words of its President, has confirmed its intention to launch a war against and occupy Iraq, regardless of the circumstances.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm that Iraq will continue to work with the Security Council to make the truth known: Iraq is free of weapons of mass destruction. Iraq hopes that the Council will continue to search for a peaceful solution to the crisis, ensure that the work of the inspectors continues and resume the oil for food programme.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now have the pleasure of giving the floor to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan.

The Secretary-General: Needless to say, I fully share the regrets expressed by many members of the Council at the fact that it has not been possible to reach a common position. Whatever our differing views on this complex issue, we must all feel that this is a sad day for the United Nations and the international community. I know that millions of people around the world share this sense of disappointment, and are deeply alarmed by the prospect of imminent war.

Let me here pay tribute to the United Nations staff — both international and Iraqi — who have worked so hard in Iraq up to the last possible moment. That includes the inspectors, whose work has now sadly been suspended. I would want to pay a special tribute to Mr. Blix, Mr. ElBaradei and Mr. Lopez Da Silva, the Humanitarian Coordinator under whose leadership the staff worked in Iraq.

It is the plight of the Iraqi people that is now my most immediate concern, and I have been glad to hear that sentiment shared by all the speakers in this debate. In the past 20 years, Iraqis have been through two major wars, internal uprisings and conflict and more than a decade of debilitating sanctions. The country's vital infrastructure has been devastated, so that it no longer meets the most basic needs of clean water, health or education.

Already, Iraq's most vulnerable citizens — the elderly, women and children, and the disabled — are denied basic health care for lack of medicine and medical equipment. Already, nearly one million Iraqi children suffer from chronic malnutrition. Already, Iraqis are heavily dependent on the food ration that is handed out each month to every family in the country. For more than 60 per cent of the population, this ration is their main source of income. Many families have to sell part of it to buy clothes or other essentials for their children.

All that is true as we speak. In the short term, the conflict that is now clearly about to start can make things worse — perhaps much worse. I am sure all members of this Council will agree that we must do

everything we can to mitigate this imminent disaster, which could easily lead to epidemics and starvation.

Under international law, the responsibility for protecting civilians in conflict falls on the belligerents. In any area under military occupation, responsibility for the welfare of the population falls on the occupying Power.

Without in any way assuming or diminishing that ultimate responsibility, we in the United Nations will do whatever we can to help. As you know, the humanitarian agencies of the United Nations have for some time been engaged in preparing for this contingency, even while we hoped it could still be averted.

We have done our best to assess the possible effects of war, in terms of population displacement and human need, and to position our personnel and equipment accordingly. For these preparations we requested $123.5 million from donors a month ago, but only $45 million has been pledged, and $34 million received to date. I am afraid that we shall very soon be coming back with an appeal for much larger sums to finance actual relief operations — and I earnestly hope that Member States will respond with generosity and speed.

We have also examined the situation caused by the suspension of the activities of the oil for food programme in Iraq and ways that the programme could be adjusted temporarily to enable us to continue providing humanitarian assistance to the people of Iraq during and after hostilities.

Such adjustments would require decisions by the Council. I will therefore submit my specific proposals for the Council's consideration, as suggested in your note (S/2003/337), Mr. President.

In conclusion, let me express the hope that the effort to relieve the sufferings of the Iraqi people and to rehabilitate their society after so much destruction may yet prove to be the task around which the unity of the Council can be rebuilt.

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.4722

Security Council

Fifty-eighth year

Provisional

4722nd meeting

Wednesday, 19 March 2003, 3.30 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Traoré	(Guinea)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Helder Lucas
	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	Cameroon	Mr. Tidjani
	Chile	Mr. Maquieira
	China	Mr. Zhang Yishan
	France	Mr. Duclos
	Germany	Mr. Pleuger
	Mexico	Mrs. Arce de Jeannet
	Pakistan	Mr. Akram
	Russian Federation	Mr. Gatilov
	Spain	Ms. Menendez
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Mekdad
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Thomson
	United States of America	Mr. Negroponte

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

03-28610 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.40 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Terje Roed-Larsen, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Roed-Larsen to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Terje Roed-Larsen, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General.

I now give him the floor.

Mr. Roed-Larsen: Recognizing the urgency of the Security Council's concerns with regard to Iraq, I am grateful for the opportunity to brief the Council on the situation in a different part of the Middle East. This month marks two and-a-half years of crisis in Israel and in the West Bank and Gaza Strip — two and-a-half years of mourning and insecurity, of political stalemate and economic ruin. Although this crisis is not new, the need to resolve it is as critical as ever, for it is also unpredictable and has the potential to destabilize the Middle East.

At the same time, a door of new opportunity has opened. With the front lines of war rapidly appearing before us, it provides us with the possibility of a front line for peace. But to reinforce that front line requires visible and vigorous actions.

For the first time in two and-a-half years, I believe we have a real opportunity not only to begin rebuilding the shattered Israeli and Palestinian relationship, but also to finally start implementing a process that can lead to the realization of our shared vision and goals for peace and security in the region. But first, we need to get the parties back to the table. And that requires three critical decisions, taken in parallel by the key actors in this process. I am heartened to say that some of those decisions are, in fact, already on their way to being realized.

First, the Palestinian Authority must make fundamental decisions on reform in order to re-establish itself as a credible partner for Israel and the international community. Notably, the completion yesterday of the appointment of a credible and empowered Prime Minister was a major step. Now we must see immediate efforts on the part of the new Palestinian Government to do everything within its power to curb terrorism and all forms of violence and threats.

Secondly, the international community, through the Quartet — that is, Russia, the United States, the European Union and the United Nations — must introduce the road map, as agreed in its final draft in Washington, D.C., on 20 December. That should be an agreed starting point. The parties will be asked to make contributions on how best to proceed with its implementation.

Thirdly, the Government of Israel must sit down at the negotiating table on this basis. The Government of Israel must also take immediate and serious steps to prevent harm to innocent Palestinian civilians and to alleviate the widespread suffering caused by its security measures.

In order to move forward, however, we must have no illusions about where we stand.

Since our last briefing to the Council, 162 people have lost their lives to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict: 135 Palestinians and 27 Israelis. That raises the total death toll since September 2000 to 2,502 Palestinians and 724 Israelis.

The Palestinian Authority must do everything in its power to prevent the killing of innocents. On 3 March, the murderous suicide bombing of a bus in the Carmeliya neighbourhood of Haifa killed 17 people, in addition to the bomber, and injured more than 30, half of them seriously. As we have stated many times in the past, such mass murder — such outrageous waste of

life — cannot be justified on any grounds or by any cause. I call on the Palestinian Authority to bring to justice those involved in planning such attacks, and I call on the groups responsible to end their use of terror once and for all.

If not, what is left of the Palestinian Authority security forces will have to confront those who murder civilians in acts that cannot be seen as political or justified by any means. Although the Palestinian Authority's circumstances are extremely difficult, it is the legitimate authority within agreed Palestinian Authority areas. Unless it exercises — with all means available — its monopoly on the use of force in those limited areas, it will have failed in its authority and leadership.

During the past month, Israeli military forces conducted intensive operations in a number of Palestinian cities and refugee camps throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Those operations caused intolerably high numbers of civilian casualties — particularly in the Gaza Strip, where the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) conducted its largest incursions since the beginning of the crisis.

There are disturbing reports that the force used by Israel was excessive and at times indiscriminate. On a number of occasions, the Israeli military used powerful explosives to demolish the family homes of persons accused of attacks against Israeli targets, often causing substantial damage to adjacent buildings. In one such operation in a refugee camp in Gaza, a woman who was almost nine months pregnant died when her house collapsed on her, and medical personnel were prevented from reaching her. Just this week, the American peace activist Rachel Corrie died after an IDF bulldozer ran her over. Perhaps the saddest and most telling statistic of the trauma being inflicted on Gaza: at least 22 children younger than 18 have been killed there in the past two months alone.

As all four members of the Quartet have stressed — and stressed repeatedly — over the course of this crisis, Israel has an absolute obligation under international law to minimize harm to innocent civilians. I call once again on the Government of Israel to take more proactive steps to ensure that its military forces abide scrupulously by those principles, to re-examine their rules of engagement and to conduct a robust investigation of each and every civilian death caused by Israeli military activity. Like every other State, Israel has a right to self-defence. But that right must be exercised with caution, using reasonable means.

The ongoing physical insecurity so acutely felt by Palestinians and Israelis alike is also creating serious economic insecurity. A massive infusion of foreign assistance has helped to prevent a total collapse of the Palestinian economy. Stark evidence of this crisis was presented last month in London to the primary forum for donors to the Palestinians, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee.

The World Bank and my office, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories (UNSCO), presented our latest detailed assessment of Palestinian economic life. The findings are alarming. In just 27 months, closure and other movement restrictions reduced Palestinian gross national income by approximately $5.4 billion — the entire year's worth of income. Poverty, defined as less than $2 consumption per day, has increased from 21 per cent on the eve of the crisis, to 60 per cent today — and 75 per cent in the Gaza Strip. In addition, real per capita food consumption has dropped by up to 30 per cent since September 2000.

The Palestinian private sector has been hit particularly hard in the last two years. Well over 50 per cent of the private workforce has been laid off; and, according to UNSCO figures, unemployment now stands at 45 per cent. Bank credit to the private sector is drying up, and the Palestinian Authority currently owes private suppliers approximately $370 million in unpaid bills.

Many Palestinians have turned to the agricultural sector as a coping mechanism. However, construction by Israel of the separation wall in the West Bank, coupled with severe movement restrictions, have denied many communities access to their land and sources of livelihood. This has the potential of creating communities wholly dependent on aid. The town of Qalqilya is a case in point, where some 32,000 Palestinians are virtually surrounded by the separation wall, and access to and from town is limited to an eight-metre gate supervised by Israeli soldiers. In such circumstances, it is difficult to see how the minimum social, economic and humanitarian needs of the local population can be met.

The aggregate social costs of these conditions are staggering — and very difficult to reverse. Palestinians

in the West Bank and Gaza Strip face near-total insecurity; they lack any avenue for improving their circumstances or addressing violations of their basic rights. In view of the prevailing circumstances, many adolescents see no reason to continue their education; school drop-out rates have risen markedly. In addition, teachers are reporting an increase in violent behaviour at school. And as the crisis persists, social and human rights organizations have noted growing violence against women.

I would like to emphasize that international aid alone cannot respond adequately to these problems. Its continuation is critical to avoid total collapse. But even if annual donor aid were to double from its current $1 billion, which is now poured in on an annual basis, it would have only a marginal effect on alleviating poverty rates.

At last month's Ad Hoc Liaison Committee meeting of all major donors, the multilateral institutions and the parties, donors expressed their conviction that support to the Palestinian Authority remains the best short-term vehicle for addressing the dire economic and humanitarian situation. They also stressed that Israel must do more to reduce the burden of security restrictions on innocent civilians and facilitate the provision of international assistance to communities in need. In this regard, I note with concern that the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) have had to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars in storage and other costs due to security clearance delays at Israeli ports and border crossings, some of which have lasted as long as 40 days.

More broadly, donors stressed the urgent need to re-establish a tripartite effort involving Palestinians, Israelis and the international community, working in partnership to address these problems, along with the security and political issues that have spawned them. I suggested at the London meetings that donors regularize weekly meetings with the parties at ministerial level as soon as a Palestinian Prime Minister and his cabinet are formed.

The point to come out of this is that, if the current Israeli security regime remains, the Palestinian humanitarian situation will continue to deteriorate at alarming speed. And this brings us to the only way out of this crisis — namely, a negotiated political solution.

Sir, let me turn to the three key decisions that the key actors must take. I believe that the Palestinian Authority's progress in implementing reforms, particularly the establishment of a credible and empowered office of the Prime Minister, provides an opportunity to begin rebuilding a peaceful partnership of negotiations.

Yesterday, after a near-unanimous decision by the Palestinian Legislative Council, President Arafat approved a bill of amendments to the Palestinian Authority Basic Law that creates the post of Prime Minister and defines his powers.

The amendments to the Basic Law give the Prime Minister a number of powers currently held by the Palestinian Authority President, including appointing or removing cabinet ministers and other senior officials; convening and presiding over cabinet meetings; and supervising the work of Palestinian Authority ministries and other institutions, including the Ministry of Interior, which is responsible for public order and internal security.

With the political blessing of the Palestine Liberation Organization's Central Council, he nominated Mahmoud Abbas — Abu Mazen — to the post of Prime Minister. Abu Mazen, a credible and well-respected leader, now has up to five weeks to present a new government to the Palestinian Legislative Council for approval. Hopefully his Government will be in place long before that.

I believe that President Arafat, the Palestinian leadership and the Palestinian Legislative Council deserve to be commended for this courageous and visionary step, and for the other reforms they have undertaken, with full transparency and in close cooperation and coordination with the international community and the Quartet, which has kept in particularly close contact with the Governments of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan during this process.

Other key areas of reform were discussed in London on 19 and 20 February at the Quartet's Task Force on Palestinian Reform, which met at the capital level, with the participation of the Quartet envoys. Its overall assessment was that the Palestinian Authority has made impressive progress in implementing reforms under exceptionally difficult circumstances. Although the Task Force remained very critical of the lack of progress in the judicial sector, there was general consensus that financial accountability and market

economy reforms continue to progress at a rapid pace. Task Force members also commended the Palestinian Authority for adopting a detailed and ambitious action plan for public administration and civil service reform.

The Task Force noted that the reform process was seriously hampered by Israeli mobility restrictions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which both stymied its progress and undermined its credibility. Task Force members urged the Government of Israel to help facilitate the reform process, while also reiterating that it must minimize the impact of its security measures on the civilian population.

The Palestinian Authority has started taking important decisions to restart negotiations. Now it is the turn of both Israel and the international community. Quite simply, Israel and the Palestinian Authority must return to the table in a negotiating framework with the Quartet road map as its starting point. Israel must also look at ways to ease the massive burden on the Palestinian civilian population in the West Bank and Gaza.

As members of the Council are aware, Prime Minister Sharon's Government was sworn in on 27 February. The Prime Minister's new coalition brings together the Likud, Shinui, National Union and National Religious parties.

No one underestimates the challenges facing Israel at this juncture in its history. Terrorism is still murdering innocent men, women and children in Israel's streets. Against the backdrop of violence and instability, the Israeli economy is in distress, with rising unemployment and increasing social problems, particularly for the poor.

I commend the Prime Minister for standing by his stated commitment to the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, as outlined in President Bush's statement of 24 June 2002. It is towards achieving that vision that we now must turn. Recent conversations I have had with senior Israeli interlocutors clearly show that there is now a will to go back to the table.

With war in Iraq even more likely — perhaps almost here — it is imperative that the members of this Council demonstrate to the peoples of the region and of the world that their ultimate goal in the Middle East is peace. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict we must not be blind to or underestimate the challenges that lie ahead, particularly on the security front. But a door has opened, and we must now walk through it.

I believe that President Bush's announcement last Friday that the Quartet will present the road map to the parties as soon as a credible and empowered Prime Minister is confirmed is an important step on which we must build. The development of the road map has been a lengthy and meticulous process. It began with the Quartet Principals' meeting in New York last September at the Secretary-General's initiative and in his office.

In that meeting, we decided that we should, in operational terms, spell out reciprocal steps to be taken by the parties in each of its phases. A key guiding principle was the Secretary-General's conceptual distinction between parallelism and sequentialism. No longer could we move through a process based on sequentialism. We had to pursue progress across the board and in parallel on all issues — security, economic and political. Critically, as we have seen so many times, no ceasefire can take hold if political progress and economic suffering are not simultaneously addressed.

Under the road map and under the auspices of the Quartet, progress would be monitored and assessed on the basis of the parties' compliance with specific performance benchmarks. For more than a year, the Quartet has engaged in extensive consultations on developing the road map. Most of this has been internal, but the Quartet has also engaged the Government of Israel, the Palestinian Authority, other Governments in the region and key international players. I believe that the text that ultimately emerged from the Quartet's meetings in December 2002 in Washington, D.C., represents a finely tuned balance between the interests and capacities of all concerned parties.

A number of features of the road map are essential to its successful implementation. As the Secretary-General has repeatedly observed, every attempt to implement a sequential approach over the past two years has failed. So, first and foremost, the road map sets out reciprocal obligations for Israelis and Palestinians that they must implement in parallel.

The road map requires immediate action by both sides. The Palestinian Authority must not only declare an unequivocal end to violence and terrorism, but also undertake visible efforts on the ground to prevent

violent attacks on Israelis anywhere. At the same time, the Government of Israel must end actions that undermine trust, such as proactive security operations, attacks on civilians, confiscation and demolition of Palestinian homes and property, and other measures specified in the Tenet plan. Israel must also immediately dismantle settlement outposts erected since March 2001 and, consistent with the Mitchell report, freeze all settlement activity, including natural growth.

A second new and critical feature of the road map is that it clearly defines our final destination. In accordance with Security Council resolution 1397 (2002), the final negotiated settlement will result in the emergence of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours. The settlement will resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and end the occupation that began in 1967 — a vital element of international efforts to promote comprehensive peace in the Middle East. In addition, because only a comprehensive peace can bring stability, security and prosperity to the region, the other tracks of the Middle East peace process will be revived. This will also been done in parallel, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Despite the continued distrust between the two sides, I am confident that there is now mutual recognition of the many imperatives that compel them to embrace a peace process once again. I strongly believe that it is in their mutual self-interest never to lose sight of the need to forge a common vision of their future. The road map defines that vision and the steps needed to achieve it.

To be sure, many details still need to be worked out. We welcome the parties' ideas about how best to implement their obligations and how the Quartet and others can assist them. But first we must begin. And the only way to begin, as President Bush and Prime Minister Blair emphasized last Friday, is for the parties to move beyond entrenched positions and to take concrete actions to achieve peace.

Despite a number of concerns, the Palestinians have accepted the road map without reservations. I trust that, faced with this extraordinary opportunity to put an end to the misery and insecurity of the past two years, the Government of Israel will shortly do the same. This would allow the parties to move forward in a dialogue that would produce consensus on how to implement the Quartet's road map. The Quartet stands ready to support such a development with all necessary measures.

Let me move now to developments on the Israeli-Lebanese front. Since our last briefing to the Security Council, the situation along the Blue Line has remained tense but stable. However, I note with concern recent Israeli air violations and Hizbullah anti-aircraft fire directed across the Blue Line. The Government of Lebanon continued to strengthen its presence in the south, with increased patrolling by the Lebanese armed forces and the joint security forces in southern Lebanon and in areas close to the Blue Line. I choose to interpret this as a reflection of a commitment of the Government of Lebanon to ensuring a calm environment in the south.

Given the high level of tension in the region, any provocative action along or across the Blue Line at this time, such as air violations and anti-aircraft fire, could rapidly deteriorate into a destabilizing dynamic. I call on all parties concerned to maintain maximum restraint and avoid any action that could be interpreted by other parties as hostile. This is of particular concern and importance at a time when the region might go into a period of further instability and unpredictability.

The situation on the Golan Heights has remained calm since our last briefing. The importance of continued respect for the terms and spirit of the Disengagement Agreement cannot be overstated. Both Israel and Syria have proven, over more than two decades, their ability and their desire to respect their mutual commitments. Although the Disengagement Agreement is limited in scope, full respect for its terms stands as proof that agreements can be, and indeed are, respected in the Middle East. This lesson should contribute to building trust between the two parties when, in accordance with the road map, they resume negotiations to implement resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and to build a comprehensive peace in the region.

I hope the Council will forgive me for taking so much of its time, while other issues loom so large on its agenda. It is the nature of politics — particularly, I fear, in the Middle East — that fires break out all at once. As we move towards war in one part of the

region, I trust we will not miss this opportunity to move towards peace in another.

In closing, I reiterate that for the first time in two and-a-half years, I see a small window of opportunity to get back to the table, and out of the abyss of terrorism, violence, economic misery and general human suffering. To seize that opportunity, three critical steps are nearing completion.

The Palestinian step has been to appoint a credible and empowered Prime Minister, which once again can make the Palestinian Authority a partner for peace at the negotiating table. The international step has been buoyed by the decision of the United States to join the three other Quartet partners in agreeing to present the road map to the parties and to call for its implementation. The third and equally important step is the Government of Israel's return to the negotiating table. It has already reaffirmed its commitment to the two-State solution, which is embedded in the road map, and has expressed willingness to go back to the table to seek a peaceful solution based on those goals.

Without a political, negotiated settlement based on the road map and the two-State solution there will be neither security nor stability in the Middle East. We have a historic opportunity to establish a vigorous and determined front of peace when elsewhere in the region we are at the brink of war. That front of peace can be a source of long-term stability in the region. However, that requires dedicated attention and action from all of us. Without that, I fear, this opportunity will be lost.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Roed-Larsen for his very detailed, informative and interesting briefing.

The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.